2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

525 number of slaps, to be given by the winner and accepted by the loser!

823 This question of the general economic and aesthetic interests of the native in his environment needs to be discussed at the outset. It lies at the root of the fundamental difference in outlook between the European and the Bantu with regard to land. The Bemba does not measure land, assess its value in size or productive capacity, or conceive of this value as a figure to be permanently maintained at a given figure by the expenditure of effort and capital. He views the country round him as all one unit, all accessible to him, and all ready to supply his needs—trees to be used for wood, ash for his gardens, building material or medicines, and wild plants, game and fish for food. Whether or not he succeeds in wresting a living from the *mpanga* depends on his constant and intent observation of his surroundings, his traditional knowledge, and, the next important factor to be considered, the help of supernatural powers.

Land and Supernatural Blessings.

•774 The Bemba believe that the *mpanga* is under the influence of supernatural beings, the spirits (*imipashi*) of dead chiefs who reigned over the country, or of the ancestors of the headmen in charge of individual villages. They conceive of the bush as a whole, yielding or withholding its produce according to the good or ill will of supernatural powers. The garden of an individual Bemba may fail owing to his own folly, or the hostile magic used against him, but it is a calamity more to be feared that the *mpanga* itself may refuse its spoils. It is obvious that where a 774 people's livelihood depends to any extent on uncultivated plants, 777 fish, or game, the element of uncertainty must actually be pronounced, and the Bemba believe that this 'luck of the bush' is in the hands of ancestral spirits to grant or withhold at will. When a native uses the word *ukushyuka*, 'to be lucky', or its opposite *ukushyama*, he may do so casually in general conversation, just as we sometimes speak laughingly of fortune having been for us or against us on any special occasion. More often, however, he uses the words in a more serious sense, which may cause him to lower his tone or look around to see if he is being overheard. Spoken in this manner, *ukushyama*, 'to be unlucky', means to be an individual who has, either by breaking a tribal code, or failing in some cere-

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

monial observance, or in carrying out his obligations to his chief, roused the anger of the *imipashi* on whose beneficence he depends. In the same way the Paramount chief who is remiss in his duty, whether ritual or otherwise, risks the displeasure of the tutelary spirits of the whole land, and may plunge the entire tribe into a state of imminent ill luck. The results of such a withdrawal of supernatural blessings cannot be clearly prophesied, but they are expected to include deaths in the royal clan, general epidemics, or locust swarms, failure of the women to bear children, the sudden appearance of man-eating lions, drought, and blighted harvests, as well as the failure of the whole *mpanga* to yield its food-supplies. At such times, the natives say, men go out to hunt, but the game stays hidden in the bush; they set fish-traps and catch nothing; they look for mushrooms and find none.

For this reason a chief, when he prays to the spirits, asks for every type of blessing on the land and not for the success of cultivated crops alone. For instance, Mulewa Cimfwembe, one of the hereditary councillors of Citimukulu, described to me an occasion in the past when the Paramount had prayed for rain, saying, 'You, the owner of my land, look now! We have not yet seen any porridge, fish, meat, and all sorts of food,'[1] i.e. the withholding of rain was a symptom of a displeasure that might be expected to result also in a shortage of fish and game as well as the millet harvest. Rain fell as the result of this prayer and then, the narrator continued, 'We saw food in great plenty, and meat, and fish, every sort of food! Every one walked in peace. The lions did not spring on the people, no! And they (i.e. the people) killed many elephants.'[2]

The *imipashi*, that is to say when they had relented sufficiently to send rain, also withheld the ferocity of the lions, and stilled the quarrels of human beings. Their blessings are conceived as being given on a sort of 'all or none' principle in fact. Such beliefs hardly seem to have been shaken by white contact. Most Bemba explained the recent locust scourge as a sign of the spirits' displeasure, and even sophisticated natives pointed out that the coming of the pest had coincided with an unusual shortage of game and the fall in the price of copper that was producing unemployment at the mines.

[1] *Mwe mwine mpanga yandi, moneni! Tatumona bwali, sabi, nama, fyakulya fyonse . . .* &c.

[2] *Twamone fyakulya fingi sana, ne nama, ne sabi, fyakulya fyonse! Bonse balcendo mutende. Nkalamo Tashîkata bantu, yo! Ne nsofu shingi balêpaya.*

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

as Shimwalule in the Chinsali district, the most secret and carefully guarded shrine in the territory. The bodies of lesser chiefs and royal princesses are buried in another grove about four miles from Citimukulu's village.[1]

Other sacred spots in Bemba territory are certain rocks, waterfalls, caves, or other unusual geographical features, named after legendary beings, who are described either as having lived at the spot in question, as having been found there by the immigrant Bemba, or as having performed some dramatic action there—jumping into a waterfall or drowning in a lake. It must be remembered that on this flat plateau, roughly 700 miles across, the sight of a mountain or rocky crag is rare and waterfalls of impressive size are few. Natives tend to speak of even low hills with interest, and most rocky summits or big caves are associated with the names of supernatural beings, who may be invoked there by the hereditary priest in charge (*shimiapepo*) at the order of the territorial chief. These sacred spots are not believed to have been sites of human habitation, nor by their very nature could most of them have been inhabited. The spirits associated with them are emphatically stated never to have been chiefs. They are *ngulu*—the name also used for a man or woman who believes himself or herself to be possessed by ancestral spirits. Were they people at all? 'Yes, but not people who go about like we do' (*Te muntu ua kuendaendafye*). That is to say they are legendary figures quite outside the tribal hierarchy of spirits, of whom little is remembered. Some natives say they were the first inhabitants of the country, but others deny that they were ever human beings at all. Pythons are said to inhabit some of these sites and to be worshipped there.

There are thus two types of spirit centre in the country—those of famous chiefs of the past, whose lineage can still be traced and whose descendants rule over the present territory. These cleared the bush here and there, built villages, and made the *mpanga* 'warm', ruled successfully over communities, died, and became protective influences over the inhabited district. The other spirits, *ngulu*, are also believed to hold power over a definite locality, but they never belonged to the lineage group of the Bemba and their names are not associated with habitable village sites but only with remarkable features of the landscape which in themselves arouse awe.

[1] The site of the village of the first ancestress of the Bemba, Bwalya Cabala.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

166 622 643

before they had been properly piled.[1] I was told that nowadays a chief would not take such a drastic step, but that he would certainly send for the intruder and demand tribute. The shifting cultivator is not free to build a hut where he pleases, although in this empty country he is not limited as to the amount of bush he clears.

The Chief's Supernatural Powers.

622 •774 643

It must be remembered too that a Bemba wants not only the right to make a garden, but also an assurance that the bush he cultivates will give him food. Now the productive capacity of the *mpanga* depends, he believes, entirely on the beneficence of the tutelary deities associated with it, and the goodwill of these supernatural beings can only be secured by the prayers of the chief and his observance of a particular way of life. When the Bemba chief is installed (*ukupyanika*) he acquires, as guardian spirits, the *imipashi* of the dead rulers of the land, of whom he is of course the lineal descendant in the matrilineal line. Thereafter he is believed in his own person to affect the fortunes of his land. He is 'to spread his spittle in blessing on the land' (*ukufunga mate mu calo*); he is to rectify it (*ukulungame calo*); he is to work it (*ukubombele calo*). In fact the Paramount should not leave his territory for fear that its fertility should suffer, and in March 1934, when the Citimukulu was summoned to Lusaka to meet Prince George, he was obliged to offer special prayers and cloth to his *imipashi*, explaining the compulsion put upon him. He told the spirits that the Europeans to whom they had given the land must be obeyed. 'We have got to go on a journey. Those who installed us in this land, your people, have called us to see the son of the King. Now we cannot refuse. No, not to those who gave us many possessions and money and many cloths. You Kampampa Mutanshi (the first ancestor) here is your cloth! You the Great one, who gave the land to Pokili (the next ancestor) so that he might stay in the capital. Let Lubemba prosper. For we are going to strange lands. Farewell.'[2]

[1] Cullen Gouldsbury denies this and says that a pot of beer only need be given to the chief by a tribesman while a member of another tribe would have to accept the rule of the chief and then give half the product of his gardens as tribute. Cullen Gouldsbury, 'Notes on the Customary Law of the Awemba', *Journ. of the African Society*, vol. xiv, no. lvi, 1915, p. 375.

[2] *Tuli no bulendo. Abatuteka mu calo, bantu benu, na batuita kukuya mona*

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

The illness of the chief is liable to bring misfortune, or rather to be associated with a general condition of ill luck, and is even now a source of fear, as I observed myself on several occasions. At his death the prosperity of the land is brought to an end just as the political organization is temporarily at a standstill. No crops are planted by the chief's family and no first-fruit rites are done. *Icalo cawa.* (The land has fallen down, i.e. the state has collapsed.) The sex life of the chief has also a mysterious effect on the welfare of all his people. His sexual power gives vigour and 'warmth' to the land. Hence the phrase *ukukafye calo* (to warm the land), and the rule that a territorial chief should never sleep with a woman when travelling outside his territory.[1] By a sexual act the *mfumu* can bless seeds or other objects required for the use of the tribe. But this power is alike the cause of danger. By breaking a sex taboo—such as approaching the spirits without the right ceremony of purification, the ruler can bring incalculable harm on the community. Of such a man I heard the comment, 'Why does he like women? Does not that imperil the land? That is not a chief. No!'[2]

Besides this powerful and mysterious influence over the land and its people, the chief is also able to influence their destinies by his power of access to the tribal spirits. This right is based on his possession of the *benye* or sacred relics by which the most powerful ancestral spirits of the Bemba can be invoked, and also by his supreme control over the spirit-centres of his whole *icalo.* The economic rites he performs at these different shrines will be described in detail later. Suffice it now to say that this supreme control over the supernatural resources of the *icalo* gives the territorial chief what Edwin Smith has called the 'spiritual ownership'[3]

mwana Cingi. Nomba teti tukane yo. E batupela fyuma fingi, ne ndalama, ne nsalu shingi. Mwe Kampampa Mutanshi imyala yobe! Ni mwe mukalamba, mwapela Pokili ukuti ekale pa musumba. Nomba lubuke lubemba. Ifwe twalaya mu fyalo. Shyalempo!

[1] The Paramount in any case should not leave his district.

[2] *Cinshi baletemwa ku banakashi. Te kucile calo? Te mfumu iyi! Yo!*

[3] Cf. E. W. Smith and A. Dale, op. cit., vol. i, p. 388. It is important to realize that in many parts of Africa the spiritual owner of the land is not identical with the political owner. A warrior people extends its boundaries and occupies land under the guardianship of the tutelary spirits of other tribes. In this area it is common to find that in territory seized by the Bemba from the neighbouring Bisa or Lala during the last century, the conquering people are offering prayers to the dead chiefs of the conquered, and are dependent for this purpose on the services of a Bisa or Lala priest. The chief Nkula sends cloth to Mungulube, the

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

 [774] 226 423

rivers, like that of the bush, is thought to be under the control of the spirits of the land. To secure their blessing the people depend ultimately on their territorial chief, but actually, in the case of any particular expedition, on the headmen of the villages near the streams, whether these latter have succeeded to their title or have been directly appointed by the chief. Fishing ceremonies vary between village and village. The complexity of the magico-religious rites, the position of leadership secured by their performance, and the degree of definition of fishing rights depend directly on the economic value of the supplies.

Thus the headman of a village near a small stream offers prayers [622] to the Land Spirits before an *ububa* expedition, as we have seen. But he is in no sense a leader in the enterprise, nor does his performance at the ceremony entitle him to special economic privileges.[1] Any stranger may join in a fishing party if he asks permission of the headman and gives him a fish or two from his catch. Each fish caught on such an expedition is the property of the man or woman who spears it, and, technically speaking, the headman or the owner of the *ububa* should get tribute from them. In the smaller rivers the supply of fish is so uncertain that most of these dues are not paid. *Mono* traps are set individually in the swamps without the accompaniment of any religious rite, apparently, and the setter of the trap may keep what he catches and put a conditional curse on the *mono*, if he knows one, to prevent fish being stolen. With net

[1] The rites performed at an *ububa* expedition vary in different villages. Molema, headman of one of the specialist fishing villages on the Chambesi, told me that in the old days spirit huts (*nfuba*, sing. *ulufuba*) to the *imipashi* in charge of the waters were built by the river and that the headman opened the season by throwing *ububa* into the stream, calling, 'Let them die! Let the fish that have rotted be white on top of the water' (*Fyafwa! Fyabola fyabute pa menshi tutu!*). This, he said, was to please the *imipashi* (*ukusekeshye mipashi*). When the first fish were caught three were put in the *ulufuba* for the *imipashi*. 'Nowadays,' he added, 'we are Christians. We do not build *nfuba*. We tie knots in the grass instead to imitate (*kupashyana*) an *ulufuba*. That is our sacred place (*E pa musumba!*) where we put the fish. A native of Shiwa Dandu confirmed this form of the rite. He said it was good to joke with the *imipashi* as men do with members of the opposite clan (*Banungwe*) and say to them after calling on them, 'You are the Mpende clan (*mpende* is a big fish that eats little ones, *mpepe*). You eat *mpepe! Muli bene mpende!*) *Mulya ne mpepe!* This is the way men of the Crocodile rag with the fish clan, pretending they are going to eat them, and it is good to joke (*ukucena*) with the *imipashi* in this way. Also it is lucky to get a man who is a notorious drinker to throw in some *ububa* to open the season. Then the fish get drunk as he does. The man shouts, '*Uleke ikolwe bwangu bwangu!*' (May they get drunk quickly, quickly!) [522]

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

224 Success in this form of hunting, as in other economic activities, depends on the ancestral spirits in charge of each strip of bush. [177 These can give good or bad luck at will, and if invoked in the correct way will give an answer to their descendants' questions 774] from the bush. The *imipashi* must be called overnight in the headman's hut and before the hunt begins. The people heap up the nets together and a child—usually one of the headman's grandchildren—strikes them with a twig of the magic trees *umufungo* and *umusangati* known as Kampinda's trees. The headman then calls upon Kampinda and his wife, next upon the dead chief of the district, and sometimes also on his own ancestors. I have a number of texts of this sort. For instance, before an ordinary hunt at Kasakatula village, the headman called, 'Kampinda, guardian of the bush, lead on in front of us with your wife NaMukonda. You pierce the undergrowth ahead of us, all you chiefs and you ancestral spirits. Go on light and bright ahead of us and let all evil branches lie down flat in front of us.' And at the same village when the people were carrying out a ritual hunt the nets were struck by the father of the dead child, who cried, 'We are looking for that which troubles us. If that which troubles us has come from your father, let it be a male animal killed. If it has come from your mother, let it be a female. Go on ahead of us.' There is no hunt of either sort in which the spirits are not addressed in some way or another before the nets are set up. Net-hunting is the commonest form of hunting among the Bemba and the least skilled. It has greater ritual importance than any other and on the whole produces more game (cf. figures given on p. 39).

(*b*) *Traps and pits*. Certain types of game and birds are caught in traps and snares. Any one can set such traps and the game killed becomes the owner's property. Trapping is not in any sense an organized or a specialized activity. A variety of such snares exists, but they are mostly found only in good game country, and even then they are only set from time to time. The most common is probably the *icitembo*, a running noose fixed over a small hollow in the ground and attached to a pliable sapling bent nearly at right angles by a rope caught round a notched stick in the ground and fixed by a transverse twig to form a delicate trigger, so that a buck, stepping in the hollow, releases the bent sapling, which immediately springs back to the upright position, pulling the noose tight about its leg. This snare is used for big game like roan antelope, and set

10: Barnes M-5 (ca. 1920) 1922 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Survival after Death among the Ba-Bemba of North-Eastern Rhodesia. *By The Rev. H. Barnes.* 26

One is familiar with the idea that such immortality, or rather survival, as forms part of the belief of the Bantu is only limited, and that there is probably no idea of immortality or indefinite survival. A curious belief and practice illustrating and confirming this came to my notice lately here in N. E. Rhodesia, among the Ba-Bemba. I was making inquiry of some Christian teachers of quite limited education as to the significance of the word "*mupashi*," which is sometimes used in translation into Chi-Bemba to render the English "spirit" or the Greek πνεῦμα. I was told that "*mupashi*" means the disembodied spirit that parts from the body at death, but that it would be wrong to speak of the spirit of a living person as "*mupashi*" or to apply the word to any spiritual being that had never been embodied. Also it would not be the right word to use in such phrases as "giving up the ghost," "commending the spirit." In these latter phrases the word "*moyo*," connoting rather the vital spark, and not anything personal or individual, would appear to be appropriate.

The "*mupashi*," when it leaves the body, goes far and near, seeking among people of the same clan as the person from whom it has come, until it finds a newborn babe as yet unnamed. The *mupashi* suffers under the disadvantage of being invisible and incapable of producing audible sounds, and in these parts it has not yet learnt to communicate by means of tables or planchette. It must find a medium who will be able to interpret its wishes and convey them to the right address. But what is its message and how does it attract attention? Its desire is to secure the transmission of the name borne by its last owner, so that that name may not die out and with it the memory of its holder and the existence of the *mupashi*. The *mupashi* is thus seen to be struggling for its own survival. It calls attention to itself and its desire by making the newborn babe of its family cry and cry until its parents in despair send for the *sing'anga* or diviner. The *sing'anga* is able to understand and communicate with the *mupashi*, but almost as awkwardly as our own table turners.

* Thurston, "Tribes and Castes of Southern India, 1909"; Iyer, "Cochin Tribes and Castes," 1909; Nanjunadayya, "Ethnographic Survey of Mysore."